



# THE FEBRUARY AMERICAN



## “THE BUST OF LINCOLN”

*A Story in which Strange Things Happen to an Old Miser and a  
Young Pair of Lovers*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

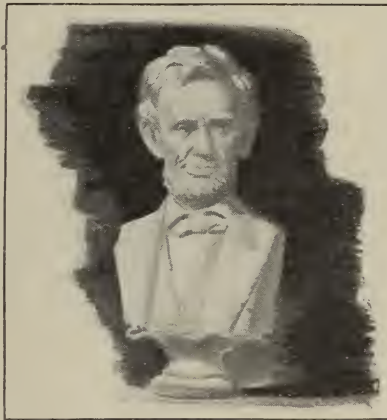
ILLUSTRATIONS BY BLENDON CAMPBELL

**T**HIS is the story of a Manhattan miracle. It concerns a Boy and a Maid, the Miser of Greeley Square, and a little plaster bust of Abraham Lincoln.

The story opens in April, which is the proper month in which to lay the foundation for a New York love story.

The Boy's name was John, and the Maid's name was Lulu, and they lived in boarding houses on opposite sides of Thirty-fifth Street. John had a little room on the third floor of his boarding-house, Lulu had the same kind of a room on the third floor of hers. John had a little window opening out on the thoroughfare, so had Lulu. Between the two was the width of Thirty-fifth Street, but what is Thirty-fifth Street in the springtime?

John was a clerk in a shipping office on Broadway; Lulu was a stenographer in the office of Welsher & Hawksbill, legal lights who hid their somewhat watery refulgence in a dingy suite on Liberty Street. The day and the hour marking the beginning of the courtship are unknown, but on the twenty-second day of April Mr. Welsher brought a legal conveyance to Lulu and pointed with a stubby forefinger to a word on the first typed sheet.



“This man's name is not John,” he said sternly. “It is Jean, yet you have typed it John in three different places.”

Lulu blushed and seized the sheet with trembling hands. With the bewhiskered face of Welsher peering over her shoulder, she erased the first “John,” tapped the keys with her dainty fingers, and, lo and behold! the word John appeared again where it should not have appeared!

Welsher whistled softly as Lulu, with flaming cheeks, sprang from her chair and rushed into the outer office. The lawyer stared out of the window for a few moments, sniffed the aromatic breezes that dashed up the cañons, then retreated to his own office.

John rode home with Lulu on the afternoon of the day when she persisted in placing his surname in the place that was intended for another. They rode uptown in a trolley car through an atmosphere that seemed as if it had been dyed a golden tint in the magic vats of Samarkand. The sun was setting in a tangle of crimson cloud that looked like a raveled piece of Tyrian tapestry.

Thirty-fifth Street was transformed to Lulu and John when they alighted from the car. The weather-faded houses had been peppered with gold from the setting sun till

they shone like the *Ca d'Oro* on the Grand Canal. A Neapolitan with a wheezy organ played sweeter music than Pierre Vidal, Prince of Troubadours. All the clangor of the big city, from the screeching of the junkman's cart to the infernal *lat-lat* of a pneumatic riveter, was welded into a mighty symphony with which their own heart-beats were in cadence.

"And you will come out after dinner?" asked John as they neared their boarding-houses.

Lulu blushed and nodded her little head.

"And where will we go?" asked the Boy.

"Anywhere."

"Very good," said John. "'Anywhere' it is. I hope your landlady doesn't serve for dinner the dish you hate more than any other dish. Mine generally plays that trick on me when I am in a particularly good humor. Don't forget. Seven-thirty."

John sprang up the stairs to his little room on the third floor. The room contained a bed and a chair, a cheap bureau, an oleograph and a small plaster bust of Abraham Lincoln. Although the bust is mentioned last, it was more important than any of the other articles. The bed, chair, bureau, and oleograph belonged to the landlady, the bust of Lincoln belonged to John. Outside his wardrobe, it was the one article he possessed. It stood on a shelf near his bed, and when John marched into the room on that spring afternoon the calm, wise face of Lincoln was turned toward him.

"Well, Mr. President," said the Boy merri-ly, "the plot thickens. We are going out this evening. This evening, mind you! 'Where to?' you ask. She said 'Anywhere.' Anywhere I like, Mr. President. I can't tell you how happy I am."

The bust always smiled at John's confidences. The long-dead sculptor who had molded the head had stamped a strange, whimsical expression on the lean face, an expression that invited secrets. Grandfather Robert, who had presented the bust to John, had a habit of addressing all his remarks to it when the loneliness of old age came upon him, and the habit took a grip upon John when he came to New York.

Grandfather Robert, who had followed Grant from Galena to Appomattox, had presented the little bust to John when he was dying. John was his favorite grandchild, and the bust of Lincoln was all that Grandfather Robert had to leave. Half an hour before he died he picked up the treasured possession and placed it in his grandson's hands.

"Keep him," he whispered. "Talk to him when you have no one else to talk to. I've had a lot of comfort from him."

Of course there was a story about the bust. Grandfather Robert happened to be on guard duty when Lincoln visited Grant at Richmond, and when the President was passing grandfather, John's relative, in a burst of emotion, forgot himself so much that he changed his rifle from his right hand to his left, and thrust out his dirty right hand to Lincoln.

"Danged if I know what happened to me that day," Grandfather Robert would mumble in the dream-days of old age. "Something happened to my blamed right hand. I've been thinkin' about it for forty years, an' I ain't no wiser yet. It's lucky I warn't court-martialed for it! There I was, standin' stiff as a five-year-old hickory, an' jest as the President came along I jerked the old gun from one hand to the other an' put out a dirty paw to Lincoln! Warn't I the blamed idjut? There was the General lookin' at me like a Kansas farmer looking at a brigade of grasshoppers, an' my durned spine got as wobbly as a bit o' biled macaroni. Gee whiz, didn't I wilt!

"I beg pardon, Mr. President," I ups an' says. 'I beg pardon,' says I. 'I jest couldn't help it. It was this blamed arm of mine that done it.' That's what I said to him, jest like that.

"The General took his cigar out of his mouth an' was jest goin' to say somethin' hotter than red pepper when old Abe looked at him kind o' smiling, an' then, Gosh dang it all! the President put out his hand an' gripped mine till the jints cracked in my fingers. 'I'm pleased to meet you,' says the President, an' when he said that an' kept that grip on my fingers, why I clean forgot about the General's black looks, an' the army an' every other durned thing. I only saw those calm, good eyes of Abe Lincoln, eyes that were fuller o' goodness than an egg is of meat, an' I didn't see them as long as I wanted to. No, I didn't! Some blamed tears got right across my own peepers, an' when I sort of came to myself, Mr. Lincoln was walkin' away with the General, an' I was snifflin' like old Gabby Connors when she's tellin' about the four husbands she buried.

"I guess I was back from the war about five or six weeks when that little plaster bust came along. There warn't a word of writin' with it. Jest Abe himself, packed up with excelsy an' shavins, an' I don't know to this day who sent it. I don't think it was the



President. I guess he clean forgot me the moment he turned his back, although I don't know, he warn't one to forget things, was Abe Lincoln. Old Cy Wiggins reckons as how the President or Grant might have told some one about me breaking out of the ranks; an' how the feller they told might have sent along the bust. Cy might be right. Anyhow, there's the bust an' there's the story. Gosh dang me! didn't old Grant look black, an' didn't Abe make my finger-joints crack when he squeezed my hand!"

And that is how it came about that the little plaster bust of Lincoln came to New York from Galena, Illinois. It was a sacred possession. Its intrinsic value was small, but its sentimental value could not be gauged. And to the bust John confided his joys and sorrows. So Lincoln was the first to hear of Lulu, and the Boy chattered about her as he made himself ready for the meeting.

"She's as sweet as clover," he said, turning toward the bust. "She is everything you could wish for. Golly, yes! And she is all alone like I am, Mr. President. I see her coming out of the front door now. Good-by!"

Lulu, in assenting to the boy's proposal, had remarked that they would go "anywhere," and it is possible to go "anywhere" in New York on a spring night. That is if you have Youth and Love to carry you. Byzantium or Babylon, Tyre or Carthage was never more wonderful than Manhattan.

It seemed so to John and Lulu on that evening. They rode uptown on an elevated train that sang the Song of the Zinganis that can only be heard by lovers whose hearts are pure.

At One Hundred and Fortieth Street they alighted, climbed the steps and stairs to the hill on which the City College stands like a dark baronial castle, and from this point they looked down on the big apartment-houses that pushed and shouldered one another, roof after roof, clear over to the East River.

"Let us explore," said John.

With the pure spirit of adventure in their hearts, the spirit that makes palaces out of paupers' huts and princes out of peanut venders, they wandered past the illuminated entrances of large apartment-houses, till they came out

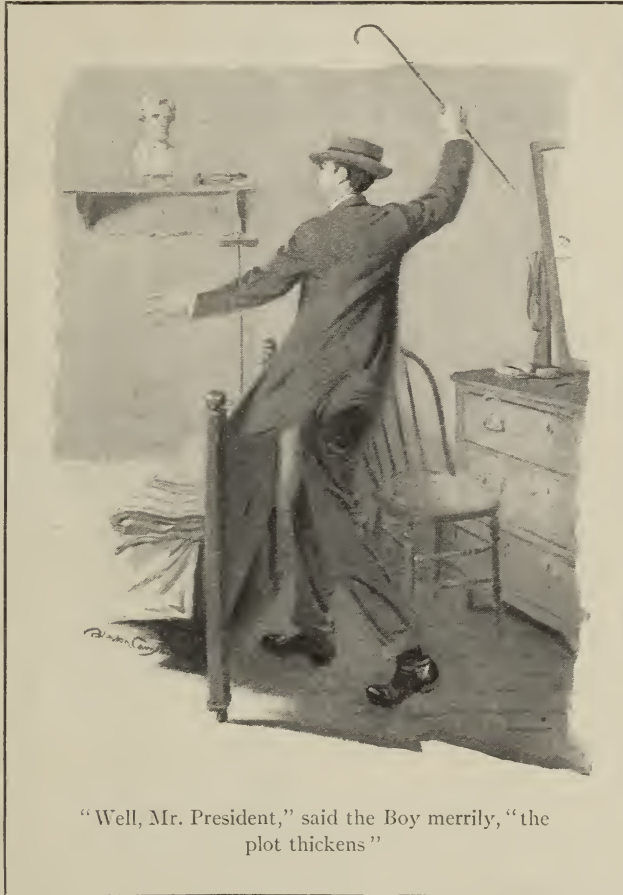
on Riverside Drive and stood to drink in the beauty of the place.

"It is lovely!" cried Lulu.

"It is fine!" said John.

From a white yacht moored near the Manhattan shore, the notes of a violin went up into the soft night like subtle threads that enmeshed the senses, and it seemed to the two watchers that the ghostly shapes of schooner and barge, battered scow and lowly punt, were moving to the delicious strains that came from the illuminated fairy ship.

"If it was always spring!" cried the Boy, walking with head erect, and open nostrils



"Well, Mr. President," said the Boy merrily, "the plot thickens"

drinking in the night air. "If it was always spring, what a glorious time we'd have!"

"Wouldn't we?" murmured the Maid. "Oh, look at the big glowworms climbing up the hill on the other side of the river!"

The "big glowworms" were the Fort Lee cars climbing up from the ferry, and they stood and watched them follow one another in slow procession. What a wonderful place it was. On the big viaduct they leaned over and waved to the cars that whizzed up and down far beneath them.

The water called the two adventurers. The river sang a song that lured them down to it. They took tickets on one of the old red ferryboats that swish across the river like important duchesses, leaving a trail of foam from bank to bank. To Spuyten Duyvil and beyond was a stretch of silver. Up stream the white yacht was still spraying the night with golden music, and still the ghostly shapes of tug and brick-barge danced a rigadon to the strains.

On the Jersey shore the two consumed ice-cream sodas—Romance doesn't shudder at the consumption of ice-cream sodas by her seekers,—and on another matronly ferryboat they recrossed the river to the city. As they stood on the upper deck as the old ferryboat butted its way across, Grant's Tomb stood up majestic and inspiring in the moonlight. It was then that John told Lulu of the little bust, and how Grandfather Robert said that Grant was going to say "somethin' hotter than red pepper."

They rode downtown on the elevated, the moon now high above the tallest buildings, and their souls were drenched with the magic of the night.

"How long is it since we left here?" asked John, as they neared their boarding-houses.

"I am doubtful if we ever lived in this street," said Lulu quietly. "Is there such a man as Welsher, a man with stubby fingers and a skimpy beard. Good night. *Oh, good night!*"

John looked at the bust of Lincoln when he entered his little room. "I've had a grand evening, Mr. President," he said gravely. "I've had a wonderful evening, and she is more wonderful than the night. I bet you would think so if you saw her. I'm sure you would!"

John and Lulu had all the passionate purity of youth, and that wonder night became the first of many excursions. They detested the hot picture shows where the endless fluttering films brought on a species of mental torpor. They longed for the open places and

the cool nights—the nights that wrapped them round like fairy godmothers.

And every evening when John reached his little room on the third floor, he would tell his happiness to the smiling bust of Lincoln. He would relate the wonders of the trip, and tell of the hopes and ambitions that had flamed up during the outing.

"She is wonderful," he would say over and over again. "I don't know what I would do in this big town if it wasn't for her friendship, Mr. President. I couldn't mope about the streets or go into pool-rooms. But you wait till I hit this city a whack! You wait! Wait till they begin to speak of the Boy from Galena, Mr. Lincoln. Your fighting bulldog knew that spot, didn't he?"

The wonder nights continued through the days of early summer, through the sun-smitten months of July and August, when the city sweltered in a dead atmosphere. Autumn slipped over the Jersey shore and flung her yellow shawls over the tree-tops. Little flurries came down from the north and shook the park elms like invisible hands. Leaves fell on the sidewalks and huddled in clusters like frightened things.

John and Lulu shuddered as the hoarse notes of the invader's bugle came out of the north. Who ever stops to think of the boarding-house lovers in winter time? Where can they go on nights of snow and slush? The Boy and the Maid were engaged. They were dreaming of a little flat in Harlem where the bust of Lincoln would have the position of importance on the dresser of bird's-eye maple.

And then one day came winter. He sprang upon the city like a pawing, snorting terror of the air. Mad blasts went scurrying up and down the streets, clashed with one another at the corners, and clutched the throats of pedestrians with frigid fingers. And in that first onslaught of the Snow King's Cossacks, John fell a victim. He went home spirit-frozen, and when the landlady peeped into his room next morning he was suffering the tortures of the damned.

O you brick caves of New York City! O you poor, pinched-souled landladies! You know from long experience the amount of sentiment there is in shipping companies whose clerks fall sick. John's landlady knew. She had the prevision of her class. In the weary weeks that followed that first day's sickness she guessed how things would go. The shipping-office forgot him, the clerks forgot him, the office boys forgot him, only Lulu remembered—Lulu and the bust of



Abraham Lincoln. And it was to Lincoln that John, with throbbing head and smarting eyes, turned for comfort.

“It’s mighty hard, but I’m not kicking, Mr. President,” he would whisper. “I’m not kicking, but this is tough, mighty tough. You weren’t one to grumble about hard knocks, though, so I suppose you think I ought to battle through. Well, I will.”

It is awkward for a girl to do anything for a man in a different boarding-house, even if she is engaged to marry him. John’s landlady wore the cap of Mother Grundy and the suspicion-breeding eye of Sheridan’s Mrs. Candor. She would permit Lulu to be in the room with John only while she, poor acrid soul, was there to act as chaperone, and when John’s purse ran low those few minutes were given grudgingly.

“It will do him no good for you to sit chatterin’ to him,” she said sharply to Lulu on the first evening that John failed to hand over the week’s board money. “It only does him harm. What he wants is quiet an’ good food, an’ he’s gettin’ that!” And Lulu, with her knowledge of the abodes of the unattached, wept as the acrid one escorted her down the stairs where the red roses of the carpet had faded ’neath the tread of the army of top-floor Fronts and Backs.

“Thinkin’ o’ marriage,” said the landlady to her best Permanent, as the girl crossed the street, “an’ here he is sick an’ with precious few dimes behind him, I’m thinkin’.”

The winter tore along with rain and snow, and stifling radiators that groaned like souls in pain. The devils imprisoned in the radiator battered John’s brain with their clanging hammers. They whistled and shrieked at him, waking him from fitful slumber with mad pounding on their iron prison. He spoke to Lincoln of them in moments of semi-delirium, and Lincoln smiled the quiet, tired smile that had soothed Grandfather Robert.

Lulu paid the doctor. John didn’t know of this, but doctors must live. Out of the scant remains of the small salary she received from Welsher, the girl bought fruit for the sick boy, and the landlady sniffed disdainfully.

“He doesn’t want fruit,” she would growl. “He should eat up the good food I bring up to him, an’ he would get well quick.” But John, in the moments when he could forget the devils in the radiator, would eat the fruit and leave the uninviting messes of the landlady untouched. When a “Top Front” is ill there is a likelihood that he will get his meals half an hour after they are cooked, and

the veneer of grease that forms during the wait does not make the dishes inviting.

John got worse. He craved to get away from the odor of the boarding-house carpets that rose to torment him on damp days. Is there anything more horrible than the odor of boarding-house carpets on wet days? He wanted to escape the fiends in the radiator. Lulu wept. The doctor shook his head. The landlady spoke about something overdue, a record of which, in Thibetan-like characters, was preserved in a greasy note-book hanging over the kitchen sink.

“I can’t bring you sunshine!” she cried irritably, once when the boy had expressed a longing for the return of spring. “I can’t buy it for you either. You owe me enough already!”

We must not blame the landlady. Landladies have tough times in Manhattan, but the thrust was a hard one. The god of lonely places danced a jig on the bent rail of the bed, and the boy looked at Lincoln with moist eyes.

“I guess I’ll pull through, Mr. Lincoln,” he said, “but I’m glad that I have you here in the room.”

The landlady consulted with her best Permanent. Poor devil of a landlady! The Permanent, thinking to do John a favor, advised her to keep the boy in the house instead of sending him to a hospital, but the Permanent knew nothing of the cold food or the bitter words that hurt like bludgeon blows. If John had gone to a hospital—then the miracle would not have happened.

The increasing indebtedness made the landlady more acidulous to Lulu. She made caustic remarks to the unhappy little girl, and when Lulu informed her that she didn’t wish her advice, the landlady retaliated savagely. She slammed the door in the girl’s face when she came across on the following evening, and even refused to open it again to take the basket of fruit that the little stenographer carried.

Lulu took the fruit back to the corner shop, ordered the greengrocer’s boy to take it to the boarding-house on the following morning, then went home and penned a letter to John. She avoided wetting it with her tears by holding her head away from the bureau as she wrote. She was all real girl, was Lulu.

John read and reread her letter as the radiator fiends whistled at him next morning. He looked at Lincoln and smiled bravely, then he painfully scribbled a note in reply. As he sealed the envelope he addressed the plaster bust.

"Mr. President, I have a position of great trust for you," he said. "I am writing Lulu that you will convey to her news of my daily condition. You don't understand how you will do it, but I have fixed it all right. I have told her in this letter that I will put you at the window, and that you will tell her how I am. I am going to turn your smiling face to the street when I am feeling better; turn you side on when I am not so good, and turn your back to the street when I am—when I am any old how. What do you think of that idea, eh? I hate to think of turning your back to Lulu, Mr. President, but when I am very bad I will want your face turned this way to comfort me. If you are gone from the window altogether I guess she will conclude that I have died peacefully, and that my very estimable landlady has thrown you out. Now, when I get that same landlady to post this letter, I will put you at your new duties, old friend."

John's plan was a great success. Lulu, looking out her window before rushing down to the office of Welsher, could tell John's condition from the position of the little bust of Lincoln in the window opposite. She smiled and clapped her hands in glee when the face of Abraham was turned in her direction, and in the days that followed the inauguration of the plan he was always turned toward her. But if Lincoln could have moved he would, in his desire to let her know the truth, have turned his back promptly, so that she would have begged the landlady on her knees to allow her to come to the sick boy's bedside. O you brick caves of New York City! What tragedies you could tell if you had tongues to speak! The country boys that lie on the mean bedswhile the landladies confer with the best Permanents as to whether it is better to lose the unpaid board by sending them to the hospital, or chance another week to see if they will recover and pay up. And John's indebtedness to the landlady was like a sandbag, that she used each time she came into the miserable room to hammer his aching brain.

"He wants sunshine and heat," said the doctor. "He'll die in this atmosphere. Can't you find any of his friends?"

"Friends?" sniffed the landlady. "All the friends he has is the little thing that pays your bills. He signals to her with that plaster statoo in the window. I went to move it away yesterday, an' he nearly took the roof off the place."

The doctor sighed and went away. The stuffiness of the room was unbearable that

morning, although the window-panes were snow-encrusted. John got up after the doctor had left the room and dragged himself to the window. The effort pained him, but he knew that the coating on the panes made it impossible for Lulu to see the bust. With weak, trembling hands he lifted the sash a trifle, pushed Lincoln forward, turned him squarely and bravely to the front, and then crawled back to bed.

"We're not squeaking, are we, Mr. President?" he said with a grim smile. "You never let anyone know when you got an uppercut, did you? And, by golly! I won't own up to Lulu that I am inclined to take the count. I've been too long with you, Mr. Lincoln, to show the white feather."

John went back to bed and dreamed of that first night in early spring when he had wandered with Lulu along the moon-washed drive and listened to the strains from the white yacht. He dreamed that Lulu and President Lincoln and himself were riding on one of the "big glowworms"—Lulu's name for the Fort Lee cars—and behind them a million radiator devils screamed in hot pursuit.

The landlady's voice outside the door of his room awakened him from the nap. She was speaking to some one, and John's aching brain caught scraps of the conversation.

"He's sick, you know,"—her voice grated on his ears—"an' he insists on puttin' that thing there, no matter what I say to him. . . . Yes, sir, that's what I say. The danger of it, yes! . . . I'm sorry it happened from my house, but I'd like you to tell him yourself of the foolishness of it. . . . No, no, you won't disturb him. Come right in."

John's brain tried hard to solve the enigma constructed by her words. What had he insisted on doing? How had he annoyed anyone? He attempted to lift himself upon his elbow, but the effort was too great. He fell back upon the mattress, and at that moment the landlady stalked into the room, beckoning vigorously to a tall man in a shabby overcoat, who followed nervously in the rear.

"Here's a nice thing yer tricks, 'as gone an' done for you!" cried the shrewish woman. "This gentleman was walkin' down the street, an' that old bust of yours tumbled out o' the winder an' nearly brained him!"

"No, no," protested the shabby one; "it fell on my shoulder, not on my head. I gathered up the pieces and——"

But John interrupted him with a scream of agony. It was a scream that was wrenched





The shabby man was experiencing sensations that were new and terrible

out of the inmost recesses of the boy's heart. In the thin, clawlike hands of the man were a dozen pieces of shattered plaster, and the sick youth thrust his face into the pillow and sobbed wildly. His companion had left him! The smiling, comforting face of Lincoln had left him! In his anxiety to give Lulu a free view of the bust he had forgotten the snapping curtain, and the treasure had been dashed to the sidewalk!

The landlady folded her arms and stared at the sobbing figure on the bed. "It would suit you better to apologize to the gentleman instead of cryin'," she said sternly. "That thing fallin' from a height like that might have brained him, so it might. I knew a little boy that was killed by a milk bottle fallin' from a top winder. P'r'aps the gentleman——"

The thin, shabby man lifted his hand and she stopped. "Don't bother him," he said quietly. "Let him cry. I don't need an apology—really I don't."

He sat down upon a chair and stared at the sobbing boy, and the landlady was not pleased by the look upon his face. She had wasted time to bring him up the stairs, and now he didn't seem to be half as indignant as she thought he would. She ruminated over the peculiarities of mankind, and thought over the approaching luncheon. If there was to be no explosion on the part of the shabby man she could not afford to waste time on the top floor.

The landlady stood up and moved toward the door. She waited for the shabby one to accompany her, but he showed a desire to stay. His stupidity annoyed her.

"Well, you can find yer own way out if yer want to wait till he finishes his cryin' fit," she said sharply. "As for me, I've got to prepare a lunch for seven people with only an idjut of a girl to help me."

She flounced away, and the shabby man drew his chair closer to the bed. John had managed to claw himself into a sitting position, and now, still sobbing, he was making an attempt to put the pieces of plaster together. He looked at his visitor and tried in a halting way to express the cause of his emotion.

"It was Lincoln, sir," he said quietly.

The shabby one peered at the piece of plaster which was the detached brow of the great man. A look of wonder crept over his shriveled face, and he wet his thin lips on hearing the boy's simple explanation.

"Lincoln?" he stammered. "President Lincoln?"

"Yes," replied John. "He's been— Oh, you wouldn't understand, but he's been a sort of companion to me for months. It's been—been——"

"Been what?" questioned the other. The little eyes that had a look of vague surprise within them were fastened on the boy.

"It's been lonely," said John.

"Lonely?" said the other. "Haven't you any friends?"

"Only one, and the landlady didn't like her to come here."

The shabby man moved closer and fingered the bits of plaster. "But this bust," he said. "The landlady told me when we were coming up the stairs that you persisted in putting it in the window."

"I—I," stammered the boy, "I used it as a—as a signal to her. You see, she lives just across the street. The friend, I mean."

A look of wonder and comprehension appeared in the small eyes of the visitor. The chatter of the landlady as she dragged him up the stairs was becoming plain. He had only reported the accident at the door, and had no wish to enter the house, but she had persisted in taking him to the boarder who was responsible for the happening.

"So you used the bust as a signal?" said the shabby one softly.

"Yes," murmured the boy. "I would turn him—Mr. Lincoln, I mean—face to the street when I was better, side on when I was only middling, and with his back to the street when I was feeling very bad."

"And—and what position—I mean how was he facing when he fell out?" asked the visitor.

"Facing the street," said John. "You see, I haven't been really bad since I put him there."

The shabby one's eyes grew large with surprise. He looked at the sunken cheeks and thin hands of the boy, glanced around the miserable room, and twisted his lips up as if he felt inclined to whistle in an effort to show his astonishment.

"And was it your bust?" he asked. "I mean, did you own it, or was it the property of the landlady?"

"It was mine!" cried the boy proudly. "It was grandfather's once, and—and grandfather gave it to me when he was dying. It was sent to him. He—Grandfather Robert, I mean—he shook the President's hand, and some one sent him the bust."

The tragedy represented by the fall of the treasured memento came to him with full force as he thought of the many times



Grandfather Robert had told of the happening at Richmond when the great President had gripped his hand "till the j'ints cracked." He wept with his head upon his knees, and the shabby man waited patiently till the fit had passed.

"And your grandfather shook Lincoln's hand," he said. "Where was that?"

"At Richmond," answered John: and then, in a desire to sing the praises of his hero, he told the story as Grandfather Robert had told it, and his visitor listened like a man in a dream.

"And he helped you to fight your sickness," he said. "I mean, the bust and the memory of Lincoln helped you?"

"Helped me?" sobbed the boy. "Why, he was everything to me. Only for him—only for Lulu and him, I—I——"

The door of the room was thrust open at that moment, and the white, frightened face of a girl appeared at the opening. The shabby man pushed back his chair as she sprang forward with a half-choked cry and clasped the thin hands of the boy.

"Oh, John, dear John!" she cried. "I came home at lunch-time, and—and—oh, John, I couldn't see the bust! I didn't know what to think. Your front door was open, and I—I rushed right up. Oh, John, your poor, thin hands! Oh, what can I do? What can I do?" She burst into tears and flung herself on her knees at the side of the mean bed.

The shabby man stood up and turned his back. From the tail of the torn overcoat he brought a scrap of discolored linen and rubbed vigorously at his nose.

The girl controlled herself with an effort and endeavored to apologize for her intrusion. "I—I didn't see the bust, John," she gasped. "Why did you take it away? I thought that—that something——"

Her eyes fell upon the shattered pieces of the bust that lay upon the coverlet. "Oh, poor John," she sobbed. "Oh, poor, poor John!"

The shabby man snuffled openly as the girl wept over the shattered remnants of Lincoln's bust. The shabby man was experiencing sensations that were new and terrible. For fifty years he could not remember feeling a thrill of joy or sorrow over the happenings of another. Men had said that he was made of flint. Men that he had overthrown in the realms of finance had said that he was a devil in granite. But in the few brief moments when the tears of the lonely pair were flowing over the fragments

of Lincoln's bust, God had flashed before his mental eyes a picture of his own soul. He cowered before the picture. For one fear-fledged moment he saw his own soul, stripped and naked, a wizened, devilish thing, wrapped in a cyst of greed and avarice, of hate and selfishness! He saw himself a niggardly skinflint, an extortioner, a miser who would be remembered with curses, and with a cry of pain he staggered toward the bed.

"I—I forgot something," he shouted hoarsely. "When the bust fell on the sidewalk—excuse me for forgetting, but I am an old man—when it fell on the stones this—this little scrap of paper fell out of it. I don't know what it is. I haven't opened it. See, it was curled up like this, like a pipe-light. I forgot it, sir, listening to your story. It's yours, it's yours. Take it, boy, take it!"

John took the scrap of paper with trembling fingers. As the shabby one said, it had been rolled so tight that it resembled a pipe-light. Slowly, very slowly, the boy unwound it, smoothed it out upon his pillow; then, in a silence that one could feel, he turned his white, pinched face up to the girl and the man. *The piece of paper was a thousand dollar bill!*

It was the sobbing girl that broke the silence. "Oh, my God!" she cried. "Oh, my dear, sweet God! John, John, it is yours! The President must have sent it to your grandfather in the bust. He must have! Oh, the dear, brave, good Mr. Lincoln! You will be able to go away in the sunshine and get well, John. You will get nice food and warmth. Oh, I wish that Mr. Lincoln was here for me to hug! John, say that you will get well! You must, John, you must! And when the spring comes again we'll—we'll— Oh, God bless Mr. Lincoln!"

The shabby man wept openly. Tears seemed to be a solvent for the cyst of greed and cunning that gripped his heart. He took the boy's thin hand and fondled it.

After a pause John spoke. "If I could cash it I'd pay the landlady straight away," he said slowly. "If I could pay her, Lulu, and get out of here I think I'd get well quick. She tells me what I owe her, and—and there are the noises in the radiator and the smell of the carpets and—cash it, Lulu, cash it, please!"

The shabby man wiped away his tears and clawed for his wallet. "If you would permit me I think I could cash it," he spluttered. "I was just going to the bank when the little bust struck me, and I have here two thousand dollars in small bills."

He pulled out the bursting pouch and sat down on the side of the bed. Lulu crowed and John laughed hysterically. They had never seen so much money. Tens and twenties, fives and singles, they covered the shabby spread, and color came into John's cheeks as he fingered them. They counted them three times, and then the shabby man picked up his hat and prepared to depart.

John gripped his clawlike hands and thanked him over and over again. "Oh, I'm thankful to you!" cried the boy. "It seems as if you were sent at the moment the bust fell. I'll never forget you, Mr.—Mr.——"

"My name is Nixon," stammered the shabby one, "but the papers—the humorous papers, call me the Miser of Greeley Square. Good-by! Good-by!"

Like a drunken man he staggered down the stairs. The landlady met him in the hall, but he didn't see her. Through the open

door he went like a man in a trance, but in a dark doorway down the street he stopped and held his skinny hands high above his head.

"Oh, God! God! God!" he cried. "What a contemptible life I have lived! I thank you, God, for letting me do that in his name. In *his* name, God! Book it to *him*, not to me! I changed the bill so that they'll never know but what he sent it. Forgive me, God, forgive me!"

With clasped hands he staggered forward, his dry lips moving in prayer. Passers-by turned and stared at him. A policeman touched his helmet, but the salute went unanswered. The Miser of Greeley Square, the shabby owner of a million dollars, was looking at his own soul.

"Book it to him, God!" he repeated. "Book it to him. He shamed me. Yes, he did! Oh, Lincoln, Lincoln! Help me, God, help me to live, to make good, to make some one sorrow for me when I'm gone!"

